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LETTER DATED 30 SEPTEMBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from the British Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a response to the letter dated 1 September 1997 from the Iraqi Chargé d'affaires (S/1997/679) quoting allegations in the press that British soldiers killed Iraqi prisoners of war in 1991.

The British Government are aware of certain allegations about the conduct of British service personnel at the time. Such allegations must obviously be a matter for serious concern. That is why we have initiated thorough investigations in which all persons connected with the allegations will be interviewed. So far, I can tell you that no evidence has been adduced that would corroborate allegations of mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners of war.

It is the clear and firm policy of the United Kingdom that all prisoners of war should be treated in full accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to The Treatment of Prisoners of War, of 12 August 1949, under the scrutiny of the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent. This policy was rigorously applied during the Gulf War in 1991. It is in stark contrast to Iraqi treatment of British prisoners of war over the same period. If our investigation were to uncover evidence that substantiated the current allegations, you may be sure that the British Government would take all possible steps to bring offenders to justice.

I should be grateful if you could circulate this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John WESTON

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